

Outlines of Lectures On the Tabernacle of Witness

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Lecture 1

The Offerings for the Tabernacle

EXODUS 25:1-9

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

Introduction

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel (Ex. 25:1, 2).

These were communications from God, and are therefore of divine value. They are the unfoldings of the thoughts of the divine mind, given, indeed, in type and shadow, but nevertheless containing the expressions of infinite wisdom, grace, and love.

These types and shadows contain an inexhaustible fund of instruction, comfort, joy, and blessing, amply repaying the most diligent and prayerful investigation.

These words were to be spoken to the children of Israel; but they are written for our profit. The *letter* was for Israel, God's outward nation; the *spiritual truth* is for us, even for those who through grace have believed in Jesus.

All these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:11).

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

The Offering

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every one that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering (Ex. 25:2).

The margin has it, "That they bring me an heave offering"; for so it is in the Hebrew. There are two kinds of offerings mentioned in Scripture, the *heave offering*, or that which is offered or heaved up to God, and the *wave offering*, that which is caused to pass and repass before him: as significant, the one, of that which is done *to* God, and the other, of that which is done *in his presence*. Here it is the heave offering; but in Exodus 35 both terms are used. Literally,

Every one that waved a wave offering of gold (Ex. 35:22),
and,

Every one that heaved an heave offering of silver (Ex. 35:24).

And whether it be in doing, suffering, or giving, when there is first a willing mind it is accepted, if done to God, and as in the sight of God; as he says,

Of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering {Ex. 25:2}.

God loveth a cheerful giver {2 Cor. 9:7};

but then he sets the example; and by his own unspeakable gift he lays the believer under infinite obligation, and leads the soul to make the earnest inquiry,

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? {Psa. 116:12}.

These gifts make not God our debtor; they are the feeble acknowledgment on our part that we owe a debt which eternity will never see discharged.

While Moses was on the mount receiving those divine communications, the people of Israel at the foot of the mount were getting weary at his prolonged absence; and without waiting for the communication of God's mind to them, they get up a system of religious worship, and set on foot a contribution after their own fashion (Ex. 32).

Solemn and instructive intimation of what has taken place in the professing church; while the Lord Jesus, who has gone up on high, has delayed his coming.

The comparison and contrast of these two characters of offerings are strikingly suggestive.

Aaron says:

Bring your contributions *unto me* . . . and they brought them *unto Aaron* (Ex. 32:2, 3),

and the result was the molten calf, and religious worship by proclamation --

To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah (Ex. 32:4, 5).

This is man's contribution to man for a professedly religious object, according to the wisdom and will of man, and what came of it,

and there came out this calf (Ex. 32:24).

God says:

Let them bring *me* an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take *my* offering {Ex. 25:2}.

Offerings to GOD for the accomplishment of *his* word and will is that which he requires.

What the Offerings Were to Be

God has not only expressed his willingness to receive, he has also specified what is to be given.

And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, &c. (Ex. 25:3-7).

These various materials are significant, and we will endeavour to point out their symbolical import, as suggested by other portions of the inspired word.

GOLD, the purest, most precious, and most beautiful of metals, is the emblem of that which is divine, of the divine nature, excellency, and glory.

SILVER, as typical of redemption, and the redemption price. (Compare Ex. 30:11-16 with 1 Pet. 1:18.) And silver

being anciently the chief circulating medium, becomes also the type of communion, on the ground of redemption.

BRASS, typical of enduring strength (Deut. 33:25).

BLUE, of heaven, from its colour, and of perfection, from its Hebrew name. Heavenly perfectness.

SCARLET, of earthly dignity and glory (2 Sam. 1:24).

PURPLE, a combination of blue and scarlet, typical of heavenly and earthly glory combined.

FINE LINEN, purity, righteousness, &c. (Rev. 19:8).

GOATS' HAIR, human nature simply, without the idea of purity (Matt. 23:32). A kid of the goat was most frequently chosen for the sin offering.

RAMS' SKINS DYED RED, atonement (1 Pet. 1:19), as "a garment dipped in blood" (Gen. 3:21, 37:31).

BADGERS' SKINS the pilgrim character (Ezek. 16:10).

SHITTIM WOOD, human nature, wood from the wilderness of Shittim.

OIL FOR THE LIGHT, the Holy Spirit in testimony.

SPICES FOR THE ANOINTING OIL, the graces of the Spirit of Christ (Psa. 133).

AND FOR SWEET INCENSE, those graces of the Spirit which are for a sweet smelling savour to God.

PRECIOUS STONES, various excellencies and perfections, both in Jesus and in his people, through grace (1 Pet. 3:4).

This is the "alphabet," so to speak, with which it is necessary to be familiar before we shall be able to read the types of the tabernacle intelligently. I think I have given each "letter" its true expression and power. I think I have "pronounced" them rightly. Others, indeed, may differ from me in this; but, like different dialects of the same language, I am persuaded we shall nearly agree in substance.

Now let us put these "letters" together in the order in which they here occur, and I think they will spell a well known and much loved name -- the name of him who is the Alpha and the Omega, the name of JESUS, Jehovah the Saviour.

GOLD, for he was with God and was God -- "God over all, blessed for ever {Rom. 9:5}."

SILVER, he is our Redeemer. His precious blood was our redemption-price.

BRASS, the Almighty Saviour, of patient and enduring strength.

BLUE, he came down from heaven, and even while on earth could speak of himself as "the Son of man which is in heaven"; and he was *perfection* itself.

SCARLET, as Son of David all earthly dignity and glory belongs to him.

PURPLE, both heavenly and earthly glories center in him.

FINE LINEN, he did no sin, neither was guile found in his month.

GOATS' HAIR, he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, though personally he knew no sin, and on the cross was made sin for us.

RAMS' SKINS DYED RED, he was the atoning Lamb.

BADGERS' SKINS, he was a pilgrim and stranger here, not having where to lay his head.

SHITTIM WOOD, "The word was made *flesh*, and tabernacled among us {John 1:14}."

OIL FOR THE LIGHT, he was the Christ, the anointed One, the faithful and true witness, the light of the world.

SPICES FOR ANOINTING OIL, every grace and virtue centered in him.

AND FOR SWEET INCENSE, his name is as ointment poured forth.

PRECIOUS STONES, the one in whom every excellency, perfection, and glory meets and dwells.

Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love, and power,
That mortals ever knew,
That angels ever bore, --
All are too mean to speak his worth,
Too mean to set the Saviour forth."

The Object

We now come to the object for which these contributions were to be made.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them (Ex. 25:8).

For A Dwelling-place

Gracious words! God having redeemed a people out of Egypt, desired to have a dwelling-place among them in the wilderness. So God now desires that sinners redeemed by the blood of the Lamb should be builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22), and be built up a spiritual house, composed of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

When Jesus was here upon the earth he himself was the sanctuary and dwelling-place of God. In him the glory of the Godhead dwelt.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us, and we beheld his glory {John 1:14}.

Before his death, in this respect, he abode alone (John 12:24). But having finished his work, and ascended up on high, upon himself, and on the confession of his name, as the Christ, the Son of the living God, known in the soul by the revelation of the Father, he built his church (Matt. 16:15, 16)

for an habitation of God {Eph. 2:22},

the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15).

How perfect, how suggestive are the words of God! He does not say, Let them make themselves a tabernacle, or meeting-place, that I may come and visit them.

It is natural to man to think of himself first, and to begin from himself. But God's thoughts and ways are the opposite of man's. God begins from himself -- "Let them make ME a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

O for grace to learn this lesson perfectly! so that in meeting together in church fellowship our first thought may be, not our own comfort and convenience, nor even our own edification -- God will take care of that -- but that God may have a dwelling-place among us, and that God, through Christ, may be glorified. "That I may dwell among them," not as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night, but to be at home there. And Jesus has told us the secret of this. And the secret is, love and obedience -- love to Christ, and obedience to him.

If any man love me he will keep my word (Gr., not words. See Rev. 3:8), and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him (John 14:23).

The *visits* of divine grace, in a Father's love and a Saviour's pity, to the abodes of the saints in the midst of their unworthiness and self-will, is one thing; the home-dwelling of divine love, where holiness is cultivated, truth maintained, and obedience sought, is another, and far more blessed.

A Sanctuary

Let us mark another thing. He does not say, Let them make me a tabernacle, or a tent, as though anything would do for God; but, "Let them make me a *sanctuary*," a holy habitation, "that I may dwell." Yes,

holiness becomes God's house for ever {Psa. 93:5}.

In the gospel God comes down to sinners; it is grace abounding amidst the aboundings of sin. But the truth for the saint is the doctrine which is according to godliness. To the sinner, by the gospel, God says,

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool {Isa. 1:18}.

But to the believer he says,

What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? and what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and

they shall be my people (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

The Plan

According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and after the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it (Ex. 25:9).

In the things of God no place is left for human reason, and no margin for self-will. God has arranged everything according to infinite wisdom, and the word of God contains full instructions.

These earthly types were the

example and shadows of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount (Heb. 8:5).

Weighty and important words! May they be brought to bear upon our consciences, and tell upon our hearts!

The assembly of believers on earth should be the reflection down here of what the church is in Christ above. Is the church above redeemed to God from an evil world? the church on earth is to be separate to God, as not of the world, even as Christ is not of it. Is the church above one in Christ its glorious Head? the church on earth should exhibit this oneness. Is the church above a holy and true church? the church on earth should be conspicuous for holiness and truth,

the epistle of Christ known and read of all men {2 Cor. 3:2, 3},

the pillar and ground of the truth {1 Tim. 3:15}.

And just as Christ on earth was

God manifest in flesh {1 Tim. 3:16};

so the church should exhibit Christ manifest in his people.

Lecture 2

The Ark of the Covenant

EXODUS 25:10-16

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee.

The Order of Arrangement

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood (Ex. 25:10).

The *historical* order of the construction of the tabernacle and its vessels, as given in chapters 36 and 37, is different from the *preceptive* order in chapters 25 and 26. And doubtless there is a reason for this difference.

In chapters 36 and 37 the divine historian begins with the account of the tabernacle and tent, its curtains and coverings, then proceeds with the boards and bars, &c., and then follows the account of the ark, the table, and the candlestick, &c.

The historical order is the natural order. When the tabernacle was set up, then the various vessels were brought in and put in their proper and appointed places (Ex. 40). All this is natural. But in chapters 25, 26 we get the order in which God mentions the various particulars, the divine order, the place they occupy in the divine mind.

When speaking of the offerings for the tabernacle, he begins with himself,

Let them bring *me* an offering {Ex. 25:2},

Let them make *me* a sanctuary {Ex. 25:8}.

So when speaking of the vessels of the tabernacle, and the various particulars connected with it, he begins with that which pre-eminently is typical of the person of Christ, the ark of the covenant.

The Spirit of God invariably gives Christ the first place, and the center place. He is the Alpha and the Omega of all God's purposes and plans. He is God's center, the foundation, the chief corner-stone, and the head-stone of the corner. Precious Jesus!

God over all blessed for ever {Rom. 9:5},

everlasting praises be unto thy name.

The tabernacle represents the Church of God on earth, believers

builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

But when the Spirit of God states this, he does not simply say, "You also are builded together," but

In whom ye also are builded together {Eph. 3:22};

he begins with Christ.

It is a poor thing to meet together simply as Christians for our own edification and comfort, and then to invite and expect Christ to come in. The divine thought is that we meet in the name of Jesus, around his blessed person, to maintain his honour, truth, and authority, that as so met, we may be an holy habitation of God through the Spirit. And

where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name,

says Christ,

there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

The Ark

And they shall make an ark of shittim wood (Ex. 25:10).

The ark of the covenant is typical of the Lord Jesus, as the center of gathering and of blessing to the Church of God.

The shittim wood is typical of his human nature,

as the word made *flesh* {John 1:14},

the gold of his divine nature, *God* manifest in flesh. While the union of both represents him as Immanuel, God with us.

In the presentation of Christ, the Holy Ghost begins with

his incarnation. And great stress is laid, in 1 John 4:1, and 2 John 7, on the confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. The ark of shittim wood typifies Christ incarnate.

The Dimensions

Two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof (Ex. 25:10).

This, at 1 ft. 9.888 ins., or nearly 1 ft. 10 ins., would be about 4 ft. 6 ins. long, 2 ft. 6 ins. wide, and 2 ft. 6 ins. high.

Doubtless God had a reason for each of these measures, but as they are not explained, as I am aware, we shall do best to leave them among the other “mysteries” connected with the person of Immanuel.

The Overlaying

And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it (Ex. 25:11).

There can be no mistaking the import of this. The divine nature and the divine glory in the person of the Lord Jesus here appears.

“WITH PURE GOLD.” He was God as well as man. And all the holiness, dignity, and glory of the divine nature were seen in him, even while here below. Veiled, it may be, to human eyes, but there it was.

Num. 4:5, 6, sets forth Jesus as seen on earth.

When the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come; and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of the covenant with it; and shall put thereon a covering of badgers’ skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof.

To the spiritual mind, he was God manifest in the flesh; but to the natural mind, his flesh was as the covering vail, hiding the splendour of his deity. The badgers’ skin covering suggests the lowly form in which he appeared, as Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary. The cloth “wholly of blue,” spread over all, expresses that heavenly and perfect character which marked every thing he said and did. As he who came down from heaven, and who was, as his own words declare, even while here on earth,

the Son of man which is in heaven {John 3:13}.

But the ark within the vail, in the most holy place, which we are now considering, shows him as entered into heaven itself: now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Within and without shalt thou overlay it {Ex. 25:11}.

The intimate connection and the exquisite combination of the divine and the human in all the *internal* feelings and *outward* actings of Immanuel, is a subject of profound interest, to be approached with holy reverence and godly fear. The shoe must be taken from the foot while we tread this

sacred ground.

There were within the bosom of Jesus human thoughts, purposes, and affections, but no thought, purpose, or affection was *only* or merely human, but also divine, each had a divine overlaying, if I may so express it.

If he takes little children in his arms, this is not simply human tenderness, but also divine condescension and love, and the blessing pronounced by human lips confers divine and everlasting favour. Yes, and “the God shines glorious through the man.” If he drops a tear of human sympathy at the grave of Lazarus, that tear-drop sparkles with a love divine. And that clear, distinct human voice which utters the words, “Lazarus, come forth,” and he came forth, is the voice of him, who in the beginning said, “Let light be,” and light was.

He sleeps exhausted with his many labours in the vessel’s stern, while the elements, as though conscious that their master slumbers, do their utmost to swamp that frail bark; but almighty power lies dormant in that weary frame. Hark! ‘tis the well known voice of Mary’s son. The tempest hears it, and is still.

The Golden Crown

And shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about (Ex. 25:11).

The ark of shittim wood represents Christ incarnate. The ark overlaid with gold, God manifest in flesh. The ark encompassed with this golden crown, represents

Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOUR (Heb. 2:9).

The blood on the mercy seat as the basis of this crown, tells us of his atoning death. But when he had finished the work which his Father gave him to do on earth, he said,

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was {John 17:5}.

And though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we know that his prayer is answered, and that the risen man at God’s right hand is there divinely glorified.

The Rings and Staves

And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them (Ex. 25:12-14).

These rings and staves adapted the ark to the wilderness condition of God’s people, so as to be in readiness to accompany them in all their journeyings. And Jesus assures us,

Where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

Wherever, throughout

that great and terrible wilderness {Deut. 1:19, 8:15},

the tabernacle of God was pitched, there the ark occupied its central and appointed place. So where saints are gathered according to God, there will the presence of Jesus be. But his own proper place must be reserved for him, and given to him, and God's order of gathering is, "Jesus in the midst."

And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne by them (Ex. 25:14).

When the princes of Israel offered six covered wagons and twelve oxen to Jehovah,

Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according unto their service: and four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders (Num. 7:1-9).

The ark of the covenant was among the vessels which were under the charge of the Kohathites. Thus the ark was to be borne upon the shoulders of the priests, the Levites, of the family of Kohath.

When David attempted to bring up the ark into the city of David, and placed it, after the example of the Philistines, on a new cart, God made a breach upon Uzza (1 Chron. 13). But when David, having discovered his mistake, put it on the shoulders of the Levites, according to God's order, God helped the Levites, and there was joy and blessing (1 Chron. 15).

So the setting forth or ministry of Christ, as God's ark, ought to be a matter of individual responsibility to God. It is not to be done by machinery. It is not an affair to be taken up by societies, formed according to the principles of men, and upon a worldly model. All this is a departure from the simplicity of the order of God, and from the examples of the early Christians under the immediate guidance of the Holy Ghost, through the apostles and prophets.

Where Christ has given the gift, whether it be of the evangelist, the pastor, or the teacher, the possession of that gift lays the individual receiving it under solemn responsibility to Christ. And woe be to the evangelist, if he preach not the gospel. Woe to the pastor if he feed not the flock of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood: and to the teacher, if he take not heed to the ministry which he hath received in the Lord that he fulfil it. And woe be to him that hinders it. On the other hand, he that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and the Lord's word is,

Occupy till I come {Luke 19:13}.

Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh

shall find so doing {Matt. 24:46; Luke 12:43}.

"O happy servant he,

In such a posture found,

He shall his Lord with rapture see,

And be with honour crowned."

When John Bunyan, then a prisoner in Bedford jail, was asked, If he were let free, would he promise not to preach again? his reply was, "If you let me out of prison to-day, I will preach again, by God's grace, to-morrow." He felt the pressure of the staves of the ark resting upon his shoulders.

The rings were to be of gold, and the staves of shittim wood overlaid with gold. This teaches us that the divine grace of the Lord Jesus, and also his human sympathy and tenderness, and both combined, adapt him to the need of his people in their present wilderness condition. He can condescend to the weakness of the two or the three met in his name, and can be touched with a feeling of their infirmities; but he is also present in their midst in the all-sufficiency of divine grace and strength.

The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it (Ex. 25:15).

Not only were the children of Israel to be always ready to follow the leadings of the cloud,

to go by day or by night (Num. 9:21);

but also the ark was ever in readiness to accompany them.

Where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name, says Christ,

there am I {Matt. 18:20};

not, there will I be. He is always in readiness to meet with us; we have never to wait *for* him, though we have always to wait *upon* him.

Then, again, the worship of God in this dispensation is not confined or fixed to a certain locality or localities.

The hour cometh and now is,

says Christ,

when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father (John 4:21).

"Where'er we seek him he is found,

And every spot is holy ground."

It is good to have a closet in our houses, consecrated by visits from the Father and the Son, and holy communings with them; and desirable to have a suitable place where brethren in Jesus may meet together free from all distraction; but the only true consecration is that which flows from the manifestation of the divine presence, and the revelation of the glory of God in the person of the Lord Jesus, in the present power of the Holy Ghost.

The Testimony

righteousness of God in him.

And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee (Ex. 25:16).

The ark was to be the depository of the unbroken tables of the law. The two tables of testimony first given, through Israel's utter failure, were broken beneath Mount Sinai (Ex. 31:18; 32:19). The second tables were put into the ark (Deut. 10:1-5).

The shittim wood, as we have seen, sets forth the incarnation of Christ, and the gold his divine glory, and both the human and the divine combined in his mysterious and blessed person; so these unbroken tables of the law, put into the ark and kept there, point out the unsullied obedience of his life as man.

As made of a woman, he was made under the law (Gal. 4:4). And he kept it, as no other man did or could. But as Son of God, he did infinitely more.

Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8).

That is, he obeyed as man, or rather as God-man, the will of his heavenly Father -- a character of obedience infinitely higher, and divinely more precious than human obedience to law.

Law never demanded that the righteous should die for the guilty. Nay, law would have forbidden it. Law *foreshadowed* the substitution of the innocent for the guilty, and atonement by blood; and Christ by his atoning death fulfilled the shadows of the law. But in fulfilling them he went infinitely beyond the law's demands.

Law declares the righteous requirement of God from man in the flesh, and supposes in man's nature a tendency to evil, and forbids it. And hence, when brought to bear on man, it becomes the ministry of condemnation. It tests the nature and brings out its real character (Rom. 8:7). Christ's nature was pure and holy, and hence his perfect obedience to all its principles and precepts, as *Son of the virgin*. But over and above all this, as the *eternal Son of the eternal Father* he obeyed his Father's will, and through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and from that height of excellent glory he has sent down the Holy Spirit to baptize into one body in fellowship with their exalted Head all believers in him. So that now, in virtue of this oneness, the believer stands accepted in him, in all that he was and did on earth, both as the obedient Son of man and the obedient Son of the Father, in all that he suffered on the accursed tree, when he offered up himself as a sweet-smelling savour unto God, and in all that he now is, as the glorified man at God's right hand above. He himself is our righteousness, and we are made the

Lecture 3

The Mercy Seat and The Cherubim of Glory

EXODUS 25:17-22

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

The Mercy Seat

And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold
(Ex. 25:17).

The spiritual import of this is clear from Rom. 3:24, 25, where there is a manifest allusion to it by the Holy Ghost:--

Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, [literally, a propitiatory, or mercy seat,] through faith in his blood.

The word rendered "propitiation" in Rom. 3:25, being the same word that is used in Heb. 9:5, and there translated, "mercy seat."

The Hebrew word signifies to cover over, or to make atonement, to appease, or pacify. The mercy seat, therefore, presents to us

Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation {Rom. 3:24, 25}.

"Of pure gold," of divine excellency and glory. The ground on which God acts in divine grace and mercy, yet with all respect to holiness and justice. "*Pure gold.*"

On this mercy seat the blood was sprinkled on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16:1, 2, 14), and it formed the lid of the ark in which were deposited the tables of the testimony. For the exercise of divine mercy towards guilty sinners can only be on the ground of blood-shedding and atonement, and in consistency with the demands of divine and infinite holiness. Hence, the blood-stained mercy seat is erected over the unbroken tables of the law.

The Dimensions

Two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof {Ex. 25:17}.

The mercy seat was of the same dimensions and extent as the ark of the covenant.

The exercise of divine mercy and grace is founded on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and is co-extensive therewith. It has for its basis and foundation the incarnation, obedience, life, and death of him who was eternally God, and is now the risen and glorified Christ, at God's right hand above.

The Cherubim

And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold (Ex. 25:18).

The forms of these cherubim¹ are not here given us, but in Ezek. 1 and 10 and Rev. 4, the cherubim, or living creatures, are largely described. Wherever we read of the cherubim in the scriptures, they are always connected with the performance of the divine will, or the manifestation of the divine glory.

The first mention of the cherubim is in Gen. 3:24, and they are there evidently emblematical of *angelic* agency. In Ezek. 1 &c., I believe they are symbolical of *prophetic* agency, and its various characteristics as employed of God; and in Rev. 4, of the ministry of the *redeemed* in glory.

In form the cherubim on the mercy seat appear to be

1. "Cherubim" is the plural of "cherub." Strictly speaking, "cherubims" is incorrect. As we say, ox, oxen, not oxens.

simpler than those described in Ezekiel: this we gather from the expression in Ex. 25, the 20th verse, –

toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be, implying that there was but one face to each.

In ascertaining the spiritual import of these cherubim, I believe what is stated in scripture as to the truth of the person of Christ is our best and safest guide.

We have already seen, in the shittim wood of the ark, set forth the incarnation of the Lord Jesus; in the gold, his divine nature; in the unbroken tables, his living obedience; in the blood-stained mercy seat, his atoning death; and in the crown of gold, his resurrection and ascension glory. We now proceed a step further; for we know that, having ascended up on high, he has received gifts for men (Psa. 68:18; Eph. 4:8). And it is this truth which is, I believe, embodied in these cherubim of glory. The ascended Christ, the risen man, receiving in his own person the fulness of the Spirit for the manifestation and extension of divine mercy, founded on his finished work.

There is a somewhat similar figure in the vision of the Lamb in Rev. 5:6:

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Now what is set forth in Rev. 5, by these seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb, is expressed by these cherubim of glory in Ex. 25. The fulness of the Spirit received and possessed by the Lord Jesus for testimony to God's mercy and grace.

The comparison of Psa. 68:18, with the quotation in Eph. 4:8, will show the beautiful accuracy of Scripture. In Psa. 68:18, we read:

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

Here it is gifts "received," and received "for men"; or, as in the Hebrew, and in the margin, "*in the man*." Christ, as the ascended man, receiving the gifts in his own person, and for the benefit of men. The gifts of the Spirit as possessed by Christ, in their heavenly origin and source, this, I believe, is what the cherubim typify.

The spirit of prophecy in the Psalm goes beyond the present application to the church, which is in the Old Testament the hidden mystery, and the prophecy takes in the rebellious people of Israel, and foretells their blessing in the latter day, when God will pour on them his Spirit, and set his sanctuary in the midst of them,

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among

them {Psa. 68:18}.

In Eph. 4:8, the Spirit gives us the present application of this scripture to the church, and varies the expression thus,

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

In the case of Israel, he has *received* gifts in his own person for them, to be dispensed in due time. In the case of the church he has *given* gifts to them, for present benefit and blessing, while he himself remains the Fountain Head, the source, and the communicator of these gifts.

The types of the two cherubim and the candlestick are beautifully illustrative. In the cherubim we have the gifts of the Spirit in their *source above*, within the vail, in the holiest of all, as received by and communicated from an ascended Saviour; in the candlestick, the gifts of the Spirit in their *exercise and manifestation in the church on earth*, the gifts being given for the perfecting of the saints.

The Workmanship

Of beaten work shalt thou make them {Ex. 25:18}.

There are three places in which the term "beaten" occurs. Here, in connection with the cherubim; in verse 31, in connection with the candlestick, --

Of beaten work shall the candlestick be made; and in Ex. 27:20,

pure olive oil beaten for the light;

and in each case it is connected with that which typifies ministry, or testimony, and points out the connection between *diligence* and testimony, and the strength which diligence gives. As shown in the cherubim, the patient and labourious ministry of Christ on earth, preparatory to his taking his place in heaven, as the center and source of testimony in the church. The candlestick shows ministry in its exercise, having Christ for its center, a labourious and responsible work. And it is "*beaten oil*" which is provided for the light.

Their Position

Of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of [or from] the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof (Ex. 25:18, 19).

The mercy seat and cherubim were of one solid piece of wrought gold. The cherubim formed the extension of the mercy seat from either end, and represent the provision made by God, through the Spirit, for the extension of divine mercy and grace, founded on the finished work of Christ. Christ having come, and suffered, and died, and ascended, would still have abode alone, and his work have been unavailing to man, had he not received of the Father the promise of the

Holy Ghost, and from his place in glory sent down the Holy Spirit to bear his testimony to the accepted sacrifice, and to divine mercy as now in exercise on the ground of it (Acts 2:33; John 16:7). But now the Holy Ghost, as received by a risen Saviour, is the testifier and communicator of this divine mercy and grace to man.

Here upon this mercy seat, and between these cherubim, it is that God delights to sit, and the glory delights to dwell. This mercy seat is the throne of grace, and these cherubim are the cherubim of glory. Here grace triumphant reigns, and reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Here every attribute of deity is glorified, even in the bestowment of mercy and grace to the guilty and undeserving.

“Hence mercy, mercy from on high,
Descends to rebels doomed to die.”

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,
that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time
of need {Heb. 4:16}.

*And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high,
covering the mercy seat with their wings* (Ex. 25:20).

Thus hovering over and shadowing the mercy seat. In contrast with the larger cherubim in Solomon’s temple, described in 1 Kings 6:23-28, whose wings extended twenty cubits, touching the wall of the house on either side of the most holy place.

In Solomon’s temple the cherubim represent ministry in its heavenly *exercise*, but in the tabernacle ministry, in its heavenly *source*.

*And their faces shall look one to another; toward the
mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be*
{Ex. 25:20}.

The number two is significant of fellowship, in this case fellowship in testimony. “The witness of two men is true,” as showing the truth of the testimony.

“Looking one to another,” “seeing eye to eye,” showing the harmony or agreement of the testimony.

And both looking on the mercy seat, shows that the grand mysteries of atonement are the center truths of the testimony.

Which things (*also*) the angels desire to look into
{1 Pet. 1:12}.

Such is the testimony given by Jesus glorified, in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, true, harmonious, and occupied pre-eminently with the glory of divine grace, founded in its manifestation on the person and work of Christ, God manifest in the flesh, his lowly birth, his holy life, his atoning death, and his risen glory.

*And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark, and
in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee*
{Ex. 25:21}.

The throne of divine grace is founded on the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and all God’s purposes, promises, and covenant blessings center in him. He is the true ark of the

covenant, and the ark of the testimony also. All the lines of divine truth center in him, and radiate from him.

The Promise

*And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with
thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two
cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all
things which I will give thee in commandment unto the
children of Israel* (Ex. 25:22).

This is the meeting-place, and place of communion between God and those who, like Moses, receive the word from God’s mouth, and give testimony from him (Ezek. 3:17). Those who

stand in the secret counsel of the Lord, who perceive and hear his word, who mark his word and hear it (Jer. 23:18).

The secret of ministry in the power of the Holy Ghost is communion with God, over his own word, in spirit in the holiest. God occupying the mercy seat, Jesus himself our meeting-place, while from him who has received the fulness of the Spirit for testimony, gift is not only received at first, but replenished for constant exercise.

Happy and privileged enjoyment! Yet, while this is, I believe, the interpretation of the figure, since all the promises of God in Christ are Yea and Amen to every believer, each individual Christian is permitted to claim and share the privilege of this communion with God, from off the mercy seat, concerning all the communications of his mind and will.

Lecture 4

The Table of Showbread

EXODUS 25:23-30

Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

The Table

Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood (Ex. 25:23).

The *ark* of the covenant, as we have seen, sets forth Jesus as the *center of gathering* to the Church of God. The *table* presents him as the CENTER AND GROUND OF THEIR COMMUNION.

The Material

Thou shalt also make a table (Ex. 25:23).

Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus, it is the will of God that his dying love should be commemorated among them.

A table of shittim wood (Ex. 25:23).

The incarnation and humanity of the Lord Jesus lies at the foundation, and an incarnate Saviour, God manifest in the flesh, is the center of our communion in church fellowship.

“A table,” not tables; there is but one.

The Dimensions of the Table

Two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof (Ex. 25:23).

God has fixed the dimensions of his own table, and man is not at liberty to extend or limit it. In length and breadth it extends to all believers, while walking worthily, yet excluding the unconverted and the defiled. Its height also is of divine appointment. It is on a level with the mercy seat. It is for believers, and for believers only -- for those who, through

faith in Jesus, have an interest in his atonement; whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

The length and breadth of the table is half a cubit less than the ark and mercy seat; for there are more saved by Christ, than actually and worthily sit at his table.

The Overlaying

And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold (Ex. 25:24).

Gold is the emblem of divine excellency, and pure gold, of the purity and holiness of the divine nature. The table of shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, typifies the divine excellency and purity of the person of the Lord Jesus, as the ground of communion, in whose person the divine and human natures are united.

That is not the Lord's table, according to the mind of God, where the divinity of Christ, and his divine excellency and glory is not held and maintained. The Christ in whose name we meet is Immanuel, God with us.

The Golden Crown

And make thereto a crown of gold round about {Ex. 25:24}.

We meet indeed in the name of an incarnate Christ, to commemorate his dying love. But he who was once made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is now crowned with glory and honour. We meet, therefore, in the name of a divine and glorified Christ.

At his table we remember what he was, and what he did and suffered on earth for us; but at the same time, what and

where he now is, crowned with glory and honour at God's right hand. And we do this "until he come," in the expectation of his return to receive us to himself.

The Border

And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about (Ex. 25:25).

[Hebrew, *misgereth*, a border or enclosure, from *sagar*, to shut up, to close.] The length and breadth of the table is fixed by God himself, as we have seen (verse 23), and also its height: but the table thus extended and limited by divine grace and infinite wisdom, is also *guarded*. There was to be a border to the table. And God has also fixed the limits of the border; it was to have a border of an hand breadth.

There are four fingers to an hand breadth, and there are four things indispensable to real and right communion at the Lord's table, according to God and his word, if there is to be real and full blessing. And we are to be guided by God's word alone in guarding his table.

The first thing is saving *faith* in Jesus. This is generally admitted (John 20:31; 1 Cor. 10:16) -- "The bread which we break." Secondly, the *holiness* and consistency of walk which becomes the confession of his name (1 Cor. 5). Thirdly, soundness in holding and maintaining the *truth* of the person of Christ (2 John 10). Fourthly, *subjection* to the authority of Christ (2 Thess. 3:14). For we meet at the Lord's table as *believers*, and in the name of him that is *holy*, him that is *true*, and of him that *hath the key of David*, that openeth and no man shutteth (Rev. 3:7).

It is all-important to see that the table sets forth Christ himself. That the ground of our communion together in church fellowship, is the person of Christ; an incarnate, divine, and glorified Christ: and hence the absolute necessity of examining and judging ourselves, and of the exercise of the strictest church discipline in connection with the table of the Lord (1 Cor. 5 and 11).

The table is not to be looked at merely as the gathering point of believers, where all Christians may meet simply because they are Christians, without regard to walk and doctrine. This were to make a table without a border.

It is in connection with the table that discipline comes in: this we learn from 1 Cor. 5 and 11. And it is observable that the Lord Jesus, at the passover, previous to his instituting the Lord's supper, having first washed his disciples' feet (John 13:1-11), then led his disciples into the closest self-examination Matt. 26:20-25; John 13:12-30); the result of which was, that Judas having received the sop went *immediately* out. Then, and not till then, could Jesus divide the bread among them, and also the cup, saying, "Drink ye all of it."

In Luke's account, indeed, who states things in their moral order and connection, and not always in their historical

order, it would appear otherwise; but a careful examination of all the passages will confirm the fact.

And thou shalt make unto it a border {Ex. 25:25}.

This is imperative; it is not left to man's will or likings. He that said, "Thou shalt make a table," said also, "And thou shalt make a border." And a border of an hand breadth, not a border of one finger, or of two, or of three, but of an hand breadth.

Faith is indispensable; but not only faith, but *holiness*; and not only holiness, but *truth*; and not only truth, but *subjection* to the Lordship of Christ in his church -- his supreme and exclusive Lordship -- for he opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens.

A border of an hand breadth round about {Ex. 25:25}.

It was to extend all round, to be guarded on every side, no gap left in the fence, no breach to be left in the walls (Neh. 6:1). This will not please everybody. (See Neh. 4:7-9.) And there are not only little foxes that spoil the vines, but there are foxes who seek to break down stone walls (Neh. 4:3). This is dangerous work (Eccl. 10:8). The border is to extend all round.

The Border Crowned

And thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about {Ex. 25:25}.

This is very striking! There is not only a divine glory connected with the person of Jesus as the ground of communion, as shown by the golden crown to the table, but also God has put divine honour on the jealousy which guards the communion of saints, because it is connected with the glory of the person of his Son.

And as the border extends all round, so does the crown: for it is the jealousy that guards the person of Jesus in every point in the matter of communion, that has this divine honour put upon it by God himself.

The Rings and Staves

And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof (Ex. 25:26).

Thus adapting the table to the wilderness condition of God's people. And God also has provided for his people now, so that wherever two or three are gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, there they might break the bread and drink of the cup in remembrance of him.

Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table (Ex. 25:27).

Thus especially connecting the rings and staves with the border.

And are we not thus reminded that our exposed condition

in such a wilderness as this renders the border of all importance? And further, that the border is necessary in every place?

And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with, gold {Ex. 25:28}.

Both the human tenderness and sympathy of the Lord Jesus, as shown by the shittim wood, and his divine grace and all-sufficiency, as shown by the gold, adapt him to the wilderness need of his people, in their church communion here.

That the table may be borne with them {Ex. 25:28}.

Neither the ark nor the table were to be carried, after the example of the Philistines, on a new cart. That is, both testimony to the person of Christ, and communion together in his name, are to be matters of individual responsibility.

The Vessels of the Table

And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them {Ex. 25:29}.

All that is connected with the communion of saints, on the ground of the person of the Lord Jesus, is to be of God, and done in the power of divine grace. Human will, human authority, human wisdom, have no place here.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Christ Jesus {1 Pet. 4:11}.

Let all things be done, not only decently and in order, but also by the grace of God, and to God's glory. And however important these directions are in all manner of service, they are never more so than in things connected with the table of the Lord.

The Showbread

And thou shalt set upon the table Showbread before me alway {Ex. 25:30}.

See Lev. 24:5-9.

And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake {Lev. 24:5}.

The fine flour is typical of the pure and excellent humanity of Jesus.

The twelve pierced cakes (so the Hebrew) are typical of his suffering and broken body, the provision for all the people of God (John 6).

Two tenth deals, or two omers to each cake. A double portion: a portion for time and for eternity. As the provision made on the sixth day, which was for that day and also for the Sabbath. (See Ex. 16:22-26.)

And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord {Lev. 24:6}.

Christ the bread of life set forth, a full provision for all believers. But it must be on the *pure* table. A pure and holy Christ the basis of communion: and the table guarded from defilement. And "before the Lord": for the eye of a jealous and holy God is ever resting on the communion of saints.

And thou shalt put frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord {Lev. 24:7}.

Thus presenting a memorial of the rich fragrance of the character and ways of Jesus in his *life*, as well as the sweet savour of his sacrifice in *death*.

Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant {Lev. 24:8}.

Renewed weekly. So on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7). And on the day of his resurrection, and the following Lord's day, Jesus himself allowed his disciples to handle in his own precious body, the sacred memorials of his sufferings and death (John 20).

To the church, indeed, the weekly period is not the seventh day, the token of creation rest, but a seventh period, namely, the eighth day, the sign of resurrection, and the rest of a completed redemption.

Before the Lord continually {Lev. 24:8}.

This is repeated, for it is all-important. The feast is not provided for the guests only, but in honour of the Father and of the Son. The table is not spread for the family only, the Father takes his seat at the head. His language is,

Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let *us* eat and be merry {Luke 15:23}.

For the full joy of communion is in the Father's presence. We are but partakers at the altar: the first and best portion belongs to God.

And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute {Lev. 24:9}.

"Aaron and his sons." The high priest and his house. That is, to us,

Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we (Heb. 3:6).

By virtue of the anointing as an holy priesthood, our fellowship is not only with the Father, but also with his Son Jesus Christ.

If any man hear my voice, says Jesus,

and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me (Rev. 3:20).

At the Lord's table we have sweet fellowship with Jesus, our high priest above, in the remembrance of his sufferings and death.

And thou shalt eat it in the holy place; for it is most holy.

(Lit. “holy of holies.”) {See Lev. 24:9}.

How God guards the holiness of this feast of love. The very atmosphere of the place where it is eaten must be holy, for that which is here set forth, and on which the believer feeds, is “most holy.”

By a perpetual statute {Lev. 24:9}.

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,
says the apostle,

ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

It is of perpetual obligation till then. And the *often* eating is as obligatory as the eating at all. When he comes the obligation ceases. It is an ordinance peculiar to the present dispensation. After this he will drink the new wine with us in his Father’s kingdom.

In the millennial period the divinely appointed and divinely restored sacrifices, which till then will never have fully accomplished their divine intention, these sacrifices will take the place, if I may so say, of the simpler, but grand memorials of a Saviour’s sufferings at the table of the Lord; and then the

mountain of the Lord’s house {Isa. 2:2}

will be the center of communion to the whole earth.

But till the Lord come, may true disciples be everywhere found gathered by twos and threes, or more, around the person of the Lord Jesus, to commemorate his redeeming love, in the recognition of his present glory, and in the hope of his return; “esteeming all God’s precepts concerning all things to be right; and hating every false way.”

Lecture 5

The Golden Candlestick

EXODUS 25:31-40

And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick he made: his shaft, and his branch, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower; so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. And the tongs thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.

The Candlestick

And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold
(Ex. 25:31).

As the ark of the covenant represents Christ the center of gathering to the church of God; and the table of Showbread, Christ as the center and ground of communion; so the golden candlestick represents HIM as the CENTER, the SOURCE, and the SUBJECT of TESTIMONY.

In the *cherubim* on the mercy seat we have ministry in its heavenly and divine source; in the CANDLESTICK, ministry in its exercise on earth. In the *cherubim*, ministry at its fountain head above; and in the *candlestick*, ministry in its manifestation in connection with the church below.

If any man thirst,
says Christ,

let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified) (John 7:37-39).

A glorified Christ within the veil is the source above, and living waters are diffused on earth, when faith draws out from his abundant fulness.

“A candlestick,” or lampholder, or, literally, a depository and giver of light. It is God’s provision for his church, during the present night time of the world, previous to the rising of the Sun of righteousness. The *church* itself is God’s provision for the *world*.

Ye are the salt of the earth {Matt. 5:13},
says Christ;

ye are the light of the world {Matt. 5:14}.

The pillar and ground of the truth {1 Tim. 3:15}.

The epistle of Christ, known and read of all men
{2 Cor. 3:2, 3};

and Rev. 1, 2, 3 so represents it in the seven golden candlesticks, with “Jesus in the midst” {not necessarily}. A collective and corporate testimony; not as originating truth, but as receiving and maintaining it.

But in the seven-branched candlestick of the sanctuary we have set forth testimony as an individual thing,

for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ
(Eph. 4:12).

The Material

A candlestick of pure gold {Ex. 25:31}.

That which is here signified is ministry according to God, and not according to the principles and practices of men; ministry after a divine model, maintained in the power of divine grace.

If any man speak,
says Peter,

let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ
(1 Pet. 4:11).

Not simply cultivated intellect putting forth its strongest efforts, and its fairest forms, to the credit of the preacher and to the honour of the ministry; but divine grace manifested to the glory of God.

This ministry looks to no earthly or human source for its principles, authority, or sanction. It traces them neither down from the pontifical chair, the throne of the sovereign, nor up from the congregation of the people, nor yet from ministerial sanction, right or left. Cause for fervent thankfulness, though it be, when this ministry is delivered from papal bondage, when the throne permits and protects its exercise, when the people recognize and receive it, and when the sweet fellowship of fellow-servants makes the labour light.

Yet, nevertheless, true ministry has its source, its sanction, and its strength in God. It is GIFT *received* from the Lord Jesus Christ risen and glorified; *distributed* by the Holy Ghost according to his own will (1 Cor. 12:11), and *exercised* in subjection to the supreme authority of Christ. There are diversities of *gifts*, but the same SPIRIT; differences of *administrations* (or services), but the same LORD; diversities of operations, but it is the same GOD which worketh all in all (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The reception of gift from Christ, whether it be that of the evangelist, the pastor, or the teacher, lays the person receiving it under the most solemn obligations to exercise it diligently. He becomes a steward of the manifold grace of God, and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. When Peter and John were charged by the religious authorities of their day to be silent, their reply was,

Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard {Acts 4:19:20}.

And the exhortation of Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-5) is worthy of all regard:

I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season . . . Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

See also the parable of the faithful and wise servant in Matt. 24:45-47.

The Workmanship

Of beaten work shall the candlestick be made {Ex. 25:31}.

Beaten work
for the candlestick, and
beaten oil (Ex. 27:20)
for the light.

The candlestick was not cast by one simple operation, but wrought. This shows the labour, care, and skill which is required in ministry according to God. It is not simple gift,

but gift stirred up, labouriously fulfilled, and strengthened by the exercise. (See 1 Tim. 4:13-16, and 2 Tim. 1:6.)

The Center Shaft and Branch

His shaft, and his branch (not branches),² *his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same* {Ex. 25:31}.

This is the center shaft and branch, which is called, by way of pre-eminence, “the candlestick,” in verse 34, and is typical of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the center and source of testimony in the power of the Spirit, and the great example and pattern of it in his personal ministry on earth.

As to fruit-bearing, he is the true vine, and his disciples are the branches. And as to testimony-bearing, he is the true candlestick, and his servants are branches of the same. In either case, without him we can do nothing.

As the sufferings of Christ fitted him to sympathize with us as our High Priest within the vail, so his active and labourious service here adapts him to our need as the center and source of testimony, now that he is glorified above.

In the *gold*, we see his divine sufficiency and excellency; in the *beaten work*, his human preparedness; and in the *shaft*, with his *branch*, his *bowls*, his *knops*, and his *flowers*, we see signified his dependence as man; his all-sufficiency, as possessing all stores of wisdom and knowledge; and his adaptation, as having now, and as the one who exercised when on earth, every variety of gift, who spake as never man spake, and all in divine excellency and glory.

The Branches

And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side (Ex. 25:32).

The golden candlestick, consisting of the center shaft and lamp, his branch, bowls, knops, and flowers represents CHRIST HIMSELF, the center and source of ministry. The whole candlestick, with its seven branches and seven lamps, and all its other parts, is the divinely-devised representation of MINISTRY OR TESTIMONY ACCORDING TO GOD, having Christ for its center.

The apostles and prophets of the present dispensation, having laid the foundation, and all the fundamental points, whether of truth or practice, being settled, and contained in the inspired scriptures, the *three standing branches of ministry* in the church, and for the adding to and building up of the church until it is complete, are those of the *evangelist*, the *pastor*, and the *teacher* (Eph. 4).

2. The mistake of branches for branch is corrected by the translators themselves in the parallel passage, Ex. 37:17.

The six branches proceed from the main shaft in *pairs*, expressing fellowship and concurrence in testimony. They proceed from the *sides*, and not in front; for the object of ministry is not to make the ministry or the minister prominent, but for the exhibition of Christ.

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake {2 Cor. 4:5}.

Standing aside that he may be visible to all, and thus giving him in testimony his own proper place, "Jesus in the midst."

These branches, as the original word for branch implies, are hollow.

In Zech. 4 we have a candlestick all of gold; the representation of ministry in the power of the Spirit, in the latter day, and in connection with Israel. This candlestick has a bowl on the top of it, and seven pipes leading to the seven lamps. While two olive trees supply the oil to the bowl, and thence to the seven branches and lamps. The two olive trees are representations of Zerubbabel and Joshua; but these again are typical of the Lord Jesus in his Melchizedec character as priest and king. While the great lesson conveyed by all is --

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts {Zech. 4:6}.

"Branches," hollow, and thus adapted to receive and to convey the oil. The import of this is expressed by the apostle --

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think anything of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God {2 Cor. 3:5}.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us {2 Cor. 4:7}.

The *source* of all supply for ministry is in Christ, and the *power* for all testimony is the Spirit of God.

Three branches on either side. The *evangelist* begins the work, and lays the foundation, which is Christ Jesus, and faith in him. His sphere is the widest. His parish is the world. The *pastor* carries on the work, in caring for the blood-bought flock of God. The *teacher* leads the soul yet higher into the truth of God, and the apprehension of the divine glories of the person of Christ.

The Bowls

Three bowls made like unto almonds, a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in another branch, (with) a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick {Ex. 25:33}.

"Bowls." Compare Jer. 35:5, there translated "pots," the larger vessels from which the "cups" were supplied.

Their oval form, "made like unto almonds," is doubtless significant. The root of the Hebrew word for "almond" signifies to watch, and also to be early, ready, or prepared, as the almond tree was noted for its early blossoming. See

Jer. 1:11, 12: --

Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? and I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen; for I will *hasten* (or *watch over*) my word to perform it.

So also 2 Tim. 2:21: --

If a man therefore purge himself from these (vessels to dishonour), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and *meet* for the Master's use, and *prepared* unto every good work.

And 2 Tim. 4:5: --

But *watch* thou in all things, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

These bowls, therefore, made like unto almonds, express watchfulness, readiness, and preparedness for the Christian ministry.

But this preparedness consists in a general and large acquaintance with divine truth; the word of Christ dwelling richly in the heart, in all wisdom. Like the scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, bringing forth out of his treasure things new and old (Matt. 13:52).

So Paul to Timothy --

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all (1 Tim. 4:15).

And --

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Knops

A knop. Round in form, so the original word signifies, and smaller in size than the bowls. These knops I understand to be typical of the distinct *gifts*, such as the gift of the evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher.

The Flowers

And a flower. The Septuagint says, a lily; probably an artificial flower, in the form of a lily.

As the bowls express *preparedness* for ministry, through a large and deep acquaintance with the word of God; and the knop, distinct *gift* for its ministration; so by the flower is expressed the *beautiful and full unfolding* of divine truth in actual testimony.

And this suggests an important and instructive lesson -- that God would have his truth presented in a comely and attractive form.

The preacher sought to find out acceptable words, (or words of delight) (Eccl. 12:10).

And

the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning (Prov. 16:21).

On the lips of the great teacher the people hung, and marvelled at the gracious words that proceeded from him; and no wonder, for

never man spake like this man {John 7:46}.

Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch {Ex. 25:33}.

That is, three bowls, one knop, and one flower in each branch. Significant of a threefold capacity or *preparedness*, consisting in a general acquaintance with each branch of divine truth -- "three bowls." One distinct *gift*, as that of the evangelist, the pastor, or the teacher -- "a knop." And one *manifestation* of gift -- "a flower."

Every EVANGELIST should not only be acquainted with the truth of the gospel, but also with the other truths of God's word, so as to be prepared to give the word of *exhortation* where needed, and also a word of *instruction*; though his distinct *gift* be that of the evangelist, and his distinct *work* be that of preaching the gospel.

So with the PASTOR; his especial call may be to deal with souls experimentally, to

reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine {2 Tim. 4:2},

but he should be also ready to present the *gospel* of the grace of God to perishing sinners, and also to *instruct* the souls he deals with.

And so with the TEACHER: while he makes full proof of his own ministry, he will find it delightful and profitable to

do the work of an *evangelist* (2 Tim. 4:5),

as God gives him opportunity. And experimental *dealing with souls* in secret, will tend to increase the richness and value of his ministry in teaching.

The Center Shaft

And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like almonds, with their knops, and their flowers {Ex. 25:34}.

"The candlestick." This is the center shaft and branch, the type of the Lord Jesus, the great pattern, center, and source of ministry in the Spirit.

"Four bowls," all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him.

"Four knops," he was the great Evangelist, the Good Shepherd, and the perfect Teacher, and he was more, he was the great Apostle and Prophet of our profession.

And four flowers. The very perfection of beauty and excellency shone out in his ministry. When he *preached the gospel*, all the publicans and the sinners drew near unto him for to hear him. And what can equal the rich unfoldings of grace contained in the fifteenth of Luke? When he *feeds his*

sheep, what green pastures and still waters do his cheering words provide! When he *instructs his disciples*, what rich unfoldings of divine truth! what revelations of a Father's love! And when he *unfolds the future*, how distinct the prophetic visions stand before the eye! How vivid the brightness of his coming! how gorgeous the mansions of the Father's house appear! and that *one* place which he is gone to prepare for us!

In v. 31 we also have noticed "*his branch*," for he too was the empty and dependent one in ministry on earth. His language was,

I can of mine own self do nothing {John 5:30}:

As I hear I speak; and my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me {John 7:16}.

And when from the height of his glory, he gives the revelation to his servant John, he writes upon it the title,

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him {Rev. 1:1}.

What an example for us!

The Knops Under the Branches

And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that come out of the candlestick {Ex. 25:35}.

The word "*and*" shows that this is additional. There are four knops in the center *branch*, and three in the *shaft*, making seven in all, the perfect number; for the PERFECTION OF GIFT IS IN CHRIST, he has received gifts, all gifts for men. And it is beautiful to see how each several branch of ministry is sustained, as it were, by the corresponding office and grace of the Lord Jesus, as we read, "*A knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same,*" &c. The evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher all fall back on him, that out of his fulness they may receive grace for grace in the exercise of their several gifts.

The Oneness of the Candlestick

Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all of it shall be one beaten work of pure gold {Ex. 25:36}.

How beautifully expressive of the oneness of this ministry and labour and patience!

He that planteth and he that watereth are one {1 Cor. 3:8},

and one in Christ. However diversified the gift, the labour, the characters, and service of each; and though each will receive his own reward according to his own labour; yet in the end he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together. By the grace of God they are one in the service, and when the whole shall result in the glory of God, they shall share in the joy.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . .

Differences of administrations, but the same Lord. . . .
Diversities of operations; but it is the same God which
worketh all in all (1 Cor. 12).

The Lamps

And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof {Ex. 25:37}.

Seven lamps, the perfection of testimony to divine truth. Six in the side branches, and one in the center shaft, making the seven. FOR ALL TESTIMONY IS INCOMPLETE APART FROM CHRIST. HE GIVES IT ITS PERFECTION. That ministry alone is complete according to God which has Christ for its central subject.

And they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it (Ex. 25:37).

Where God has given the gifts it is that they may be exercised.

No man *lighteth* a candle and putteth it under a bushel, but on a candlestick {Matt. 5:15}.

“That they may give light *over against it*.” The design of testimony in the power of the Spirit, is the manifestation of the glory of God in the person of the Lord Jesus. The whole circle of truth is to be connected with him, that it may not merely be truth, but

as the truth is in Jesus {Eph. 4:21}.

How beautifully the Lord Jesus has taught this in speaking of the Comforter, through whom it is that this ministry is exercised!

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:14, 15).

Then again, the candlestick was placed in the tent of the congregation *over against the table* (Ex. 40:24). So that ministry in the power of the Spirit is designed to throw its light on the solemn and sacred scenes of the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus, and in its light the sweet memorials of his redeeming love are to be set forth and realized.

Indeed, all that was done in the holy place was by the aid of its bright shining. Nature’s light was excluded by the coverings and hangings of the door. Within the holiest of all the Shekinah shed its lustre; but in the first tabernacle the bright shining of this candlestick gave its light.

The Oil

In Ex. 27:20, we read:

And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always.

How this oil, that is, the supply of the Spirit, is to be obtained, we learn from the example of the early disciples

recorded in Acts 4:23-31:

They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said . . . And now, Lord . . . grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word. . . . And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

So Paul:

Brethren, pray for us {1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1} –

and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel . . . that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (Eph. 6:19, 20).

Through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19).

The Vessels Belonging To the Candlestick

And the tongs thereof, and the snuff dishes thereof, shall be of pure gold (Ex. 25:38).

This ministry is to be *kept in order*, not by human authority, or on human principles, but on those which are of God, and according to God. Not by ecclesiastical courts of human organization, nor by the mere voice and will of the people (2 Tim. 4:3); but, when needed, by godly counsel and admonition, exercised in spiritual wisdom and grace. See the example of Paul, in his inspired epistles to Timothy and Titus.

Of a Talent of Gold

Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels (Ex. 25:39).

A talent of gold is computed to be about 114 lbs. in weight, and about £5475 in value {in 1863}.

Ministry according to God, in the exercise of the gifts of his Spirit, and in connection with Christ, is a *weighty* and *valuable* thing.

That which gave the candlestick its weight and value was the pure gold of which it was composed.

The highest order of natural ability, however cultivated, is but as inferior metal. It is the GRACE OF GOD, and the GIFTS OF CHRIST, exercised in the POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST, which gives to ministry its true dignity and real value.

The expression, “liberty of ministry,” has been much misunderstood. Every saved sinner is at liberty “to tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour he has found.” But this is not “ministry,” in the sense we have been considering it. The Holy Ghost uses a distinct word (*keerusso*) for *preaching*, when it is in the exercise of the *gift of the evangelist*. And it had been well for the English reader if our translators had been more careful than they have been, in faithfully

distinguishing it. This word signifies, to proclaim as an herald, with official authority. And for the preaching of the gospel in this sense the gift and call of the evangelist is needed.

Every believer, who has had experience in the things of God, is called on to look, not on his own things only, but also on the things of others. And brotherly care exercised in brotherly love is our duty and our privilege. But this is not all that is expressed in the *pastoral gift and office*. Godly souls may be able also to admonish one another. But to be a *pastor*, in the true sense of the word, there must be the *gift of a pastor* from Christ.

Every one who is taught in the word may seek to communicate what he knows to his fellow believers, though he may not have the gift of a *teacher*. To be a teacher in the church of God, there must be a divinely-given capacity to receive and to communicate the mind of God revealed in his word.

Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is as clouds and wind without rain (Prov. 25:14).

And oh, what confusion, disquietude, and loss of blessing must ever result when the flesh asserts its right to do what it will, and to speak as it likes! May God ever preserve his few weak, simple, gathered ones from this! Felt weakness, confessed nothingness, leaves an open door for the Lord to come in; pretence of being something when we are nothing shuts him out.

The Caution

And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount {Ex. 25:40}.

Oh, that we were wise, that we understood this! Oh, that the church of God had never departed from God's pattern! But it is not too late; even now individual servants of Christ may return to God's order, and individual souls may refuse to recognize the innovations and perversions of man; and liberty, and joy, and blessing, and soul progress, will, by God's grace, be the inevitable results. May God in his infinite mercy grant it for Christ's sake.